

DEPARTMENT OF ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE.

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The Jamaica Mignonette Shrub. (Lawsonia alba.)

Editor Floral Department:

Several years ago, an English lady of this county, a great lover of flowers, received from Jamaica a small shrub under the above name. The shrub, in its growth and foliage is not particularly conspicuous, bearing opposite entire lanceolate leaves. This year the flowers appeared for the first time, rather small, whitish with a rosy and greenish hue. But their fragrance very powerful, very delicious and sweet, very peculiar and is wafted in all directions. It reminds somewhat of Mignonette, but is quite different, having a characteristic and penetrating power entirely its own. In carefully examining the flowers I came to the conclusion that the shrub in question is the celebrated Henna bush of the Orient, the Khenna of Egypt, the Brown Egyptian Privet as the English call it, the Reseda of the Central Americans and the Jamaica Mignonette of the West Indies. It is one of the oldest cultivated fragrant shrubs and one of the most important. Reasoner Bros. have offered it under the name of Lawsonia alba for many years in their catalogue, but it seems that it has not found the recognition it deserves. The flowers are so deliciously fragrant that it should find a place in every good garden of our state.

Mr. Wm. E. Safford, who was for a time acting governor of the island of Guam, gives in his "Useful Plants of Guam, the following interesting account of Lawsonia alba: "Local name, Cinamomo, introduced into Guam on account of the fragrance of its flowers. It is readily propagated from cuttings, grows in the form of a bush sending up shoots and is suitable for hedges. When kept clipped it is not unlike a Privet. Its odor at short range is rank and overpowering, but from a distance is like that of Mignonette."

On the shores of Central America the land breezes frequently waft the odor out to sea.

This species is the "Sweet-smelling Camphire" of Solomon. It is a native of western Asia, Egypt and the African coasts of the Mediterranean and now grows wild in some parts of India. It is also cultivated in many countries. It has been a favorite garden plant in the East from the time of the ancient Egyptians to the present day. The Egyptians used the flowers for perfuming the oil and ointments with which they anointed the body and for embalming the bodies of the dead. The Jews also derived a perfume from the flower which they employed in their baths, and in religious ceremonies and they sprinkled the flowers on the garments of the newly married.

From the most ancient times the leaves have been used, in the East, for staining the fingers, nails and feet, and for dyeing the hair of the fair sex. Egyptian mummies have been wound with their vails stained with it. In India its use is still universal among Mohammedan women and has survived among the Hindus. In southern China, where it is common, it is also used for the same purpose. To dye the nails, the freshly gathered leaves and young twigs are pounded with lime of catechu mixed with hot water and applied

to the fingers every night. For dyeing the hair a paste of the powdered leaves is applied to it and is bound up with leaves, wax-cloth or oilskin. After a half hour or more the preparation is washed off and the hair is found of a bright red color. A second application is then made of the powder of the indigo plant worked into a paste with water and allowed to remain three hours. This turns the hair a jet black. Ointments are used to make it glossy. The process must be repeated frequently, as with other dyes, on account of the growth of the hair.

By certain classes of Mohammedans the process is stopped at the first stage leaving the hair and beard red. In Persia, Arabia and northern India the manes and tails of horses are sometimes colored by the same process.

The Henna ranks as a deliciously fragrant shrub in our gardens with the Gardenia (Cape Jasmine), the two night-blooming Jasmines (Cestrum nocturnum and C. Parqui), the true Jasmine (Jasminum Sambac and varieties), the Oleander (Nerium oleander), the Ylang-Ylang (Artobotrys odoratissimus), the Rose, many of the Crinums and Spider-lilies and the orange trees.

H. Nehrling.

The Information Box.

In the last number of the Mayflower Mrs. La Mance answers some questions that may interest our readers:

Plant Names. "What is a Cissus?" It is a large genus that belongs to the grape family. Cissus discolor is an elegant summer vine, a low climber with leaves as richly shaded and marked as a foliage Begonia. It is sometimes known as Begonia Vine. Child's Jewel Vine is said to be a cultivated and variegated form of Cissus ampelopsis. The spring and early summer variegation of this vine is most striking, the leaves being marbled and splashed with white, and sometimes with pink and grey, one of the dainty sprays being as pretty as any blossom could be. In late summer the vine becomes plain green.

"Twenty-five years ago there was a very pretty plant called Beefsteak Geranium. I only know it was a Begonia of some kind, not a Geranium at all. The pretty pink blossoms were borne in great panicles well above the foliage. It had the obliging habit of dropping to pieces joint by joint in the fall, and resting until spring. Bulblets formed in the axils of the leaves and fell to the ground, quickly making new plants."

This old Begonia is B. Evansiana, the only hardy Begonia. It lives out of doors as far north as Philadelphia. Whether it is hardy north of that latitude is unknown to me.

"What is the Cobra de Capello Plant? What is the Snake Palm? What is the Snake Arum?"

That is a snaky lot of questions, but they all refer to two or three members of the same family. The Cobra de Capello Plant is Amorphophallus Campanulatus. The other names, Snake Palm and Snake Arum, both refer to Amorphophallus Rivieri. All of these produce one enormous decomposed leaf which is supported by a leaf shaft or stem that looks exactly like a snake's body. One could almost swear to the cold, clammy touch, so snaky is it in its mottlings.

"What is Balsam Pear?" It is a vine of the Gourd family, Momordica balsamina, with pale yellow flowers and an ornamental fruit that splits open, showing a bright interior. Our



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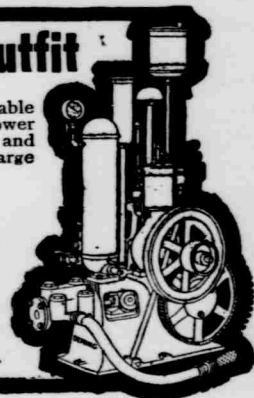
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grandmothers grew it as an ornamental vine.

Mrs. La Mance also gives some farther information about the "Corrat fern."

The Carrot Fern again. Still another shower of letters have reached me relative to the Carrot Fern. To date, four or five different plants, of which some are not even members of the family, have been identified as the true Carrot Fern. The majority have known Asplenium bulbigerum under that name. A Maine lady has this pleasant paragraph about this Asplenium: "A Fern that is much prized in our neighborhood is known by the names of 'Carrot Fern,' 'Australia Fern' and 'Mexican Fern,' the former name resulting from the resemblance of the fronds to the foliage of carrots, and the latter names because of its habitat. It is known to science as Asplenium bulbiferum, and has the striking peculiarity of producing freely upon the upper surface of the fronds young plants, which are readily detached and rooted. I have never seen this Fern advertised by any florist. I wonder at it since they make charming plants for the house, preferable to the Boston Fern for a living room. They have gracefully arching, finely cut fronds of dark rich green. They are of quick growth, a well-cared for plant making a fine Fern in one year, while plants two or three years old make elegant specimen plants. I have had this Fern for more than ten years."

Still another correspondent, who also knows this Asplenium as the Carrot Fern, says it is called the Scotch Fern, and also the King-and-Queen Fern. It is also known as Crested, Shield, and Spleen Fern. Suppose Mr. Childs, who has introduced so many worthy plants, bring out this Carrot-Crested-Shield-Spleen-King-and-Queen-Scotch-Mexican-Australian Fern,

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and give us all a chance to see this plant which has caused so much speculation. In the interest of brevity, would it not be as well to call it Asplenium bulbiferum and be done with it.

Of the plants not of the Fern family at all, the most striking one is a Pacific coast form of wild carrot with filmy lace-like flowers of delicate beauty. It is also known as Queen Anne's Lace Handkerchief."

Incarvillea Delavayi.

In the spring of 1905 we gave a brief account of this plant as it had bloomed for us. The plant did not survive the summer, but that was probably owing to some error in treatment. We see no reason why it should not do well in this state, if grown under proper conditions. An English publication, the Gardener's Magazine, describes it as follows:

Hardy herbaceous plants received a valuable addition to their numbers by the introduction of Incarvillea Delavayi a few years ago. The leaves are all radical, from twelve to eighteen inches long and pinnatifid. The flower spikes rise to a height of from two feet to two and a half feet, and produce about a dozen rose-colored, gloxinia-like blooms, two and a half inches in diameter near the top, and that expand in May and June. Well estab-